

Press Release: GERMAN FILM OFFICE LAUNCHES KINO! GERMANY NOW! 2021 DISCOVER NEW TALENT, A NEW PROGRAM OF CONTEMPORARY GERMAN FILMS FOR THEATERS IN THE US



January 31-July 31, 2021

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New York, 01/11/2021: In a time of uncertainty and new challenges for our film community, the German Film Office is pleased to offer an opportunity for theaters across the United States to present a curated selection of new, award-winning films from Germany. KINO! Germany NOW! showcases recent films fresh from the international festival circuit for both virtual and in-person screenings at film festivals and arthouse cinemas.

For **KINO! Germany NOW! 2021 Discover New Talent** film programmer Alissa Simon handpicked some of Germany's most promising narrative and documentary films that premiered within the last year, many of them directed by women. Along with these films, a short-film program compiled by the German Short Film Association is also available. KINO! Germany NOW! introduces 13 films by 14 up-and-coming directors from Germany, all with distinct backgrounds and their own personal approaches to filmmaking.

While unique in terms of style and genre, four of the five fiction titles focus on their protagonists' struggle to assimilate into contemporary Germany: In Visar Morina's *Exile*, the prickly protagonist is a Kosovo-born pharmaceutical engineer who feels bullied by his German co-workers. The likable heroine of Hüseyin

Tabak's *Gipsy Queen* is a single mother hoping to make it in the boxing ring. In *I Was I Am I Will Be* by Ilker Çatak, an ambitious Turkish gigolo gets an unexpected opportunity to work and study in Germany. Burhan Qurbani's Berlin *Alexanderplatz* updates the classic novel to center on an undocumented immigrant who vows to be a good person but finds few paths open for him. Meanwhile, the horror-thriller *Sleep* by Michael Venus follows a young woman to a small village where she stumbles upon a Nazi cult while trying to solve the mystery of her mother's breakdown.

The subjects explored by the documentaries range far and wide: In *Born in Evin*, German-Iranian actress Maryam Zaree chronicles the circumstances of her birth inside one of the world's most notorious prisons. Natalija Yefimkina's *Garage People* takes a look at a unique Russian phenomenon. Carmen Losmann's *Oeconomia* journeys into the heartlands of neoliberalism and explains its inner workings in layman's terms. And last, in *Walchensee Forever*, key events of the 20th century impact the lives of four generations of women in director Janna Ji Wonders' family.

The short-film program "Power Games" includes four award-winning shorts: *Just A Guy* by Shoko Hara, *Land of Glory* by Borbala Nagy, *Masel Tov Cocktail* by Arkadij Khaet and Mickey Paatzsch, and *Top Down Memory* by Daniel Theiler. These films explore radical and extremist tendencies worldwide, the idea that history seems destined to repeat itself, and the role that power can play even in unexpected situations.

From January 31 through July 31, 2021, the **KINO! Germany NOW! 2021 Discover New Talent** program is available for booking by theaters, art house cinemas, regional and local film festivals, film societies, and campus theatres throughout the United States. The full package as well as individual films may be booked for physical and virtual cinema screenings from our partner in this project, Kino Lorber.

The German Film Office offers promotional support to venues presenting KINO! Germany NOW! and connects them with German talent for virtual and in-person Q&A sessions.

FILM PROGRAM

Narrative features:

Berlin Alexanderplatz, dir. Burhan Qurbani
Exile, dir. Visar Morina
Gipsy Queen, dir. Hüseyin Tabak
I Was I Am I Will Be, dir. Ilker Çatak
Sleep, dir. Michael Venus

Documentaries:

Born in Evin, dir. Maryam Zaree
Garage People, dir. Natalija Yefimkina
Oeconomia, Carmen Losmann
Walchensee Forever, von Janna Ji Wonders

Short films ("Power Games"):

Just A Guy, dir. Shoko Hara
Land of Glory, dir. Bórbola Nagy
Masel Tov Cocktail, dir. Arkadij Khaet, Mickey Paatzsch
Top Down Memory, dir. Daniel Theiler

Booking:
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BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ

Feature, Drama, Germany/Netherlands, 2020, 183 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Burhan Qurbani, Screenplay: Burhan Qurbani, Martin Behnke, Cinematography: Yoshi Heimrath, Cast: Welket Bungué, Albrecht Schuch, Jella Haase, Joachim Król, Producers: Leif Alexis, Jochen Laube, Fabian Maubach. Festivals: Berlinale 2020, Istanbul 2020, Busan 2020, Stockholm 2020. Awards: Best Feature Film (Silver), Best Supporting Actor, Best Cinematography, Best Score, German Film Awards 2020; Best Production Design, Best Film, Best Actor, Stockholm 2020; Best Original Score, European Film Awards 2020

An African immigrant struggles to make a new life for himself in the big city in director-co-writer Burhan Qurbani's (*We Are Young. We Are Strong.*) audacious, neon-lit reinterpretation of Alfred Döblin's 1929 novel. After surviving his perilous journey, Francis vows to be a good man, but he soon realizes how difficult it is to be righteous while undocumented in Germany—without papers, without a nationality, and without a work permit. When he receives an enticing offer for easy money from the psychopathic gangster Reinhold (Albrecht Schuch), Francis initially resists temptation, but eventually he is sucked into Berlin's underworld and his life spirals out of control.

EXILE (EXIL)

Feature, Drama, Germany/Belgium/Kosovo, 2020, 121min., German, Albanian with English subtitles. Director: Visar Morina. Screenplay: Visar Morina. Cinematography: Matteo Cocco. Cast: Mišel Matičević, Sandra Hüller, Rainer Bock, Thomas Mraz Producers Janine Jackowski, Jonas Dornbach, Maren Ade. Kosovo's Oscar® entry for Best International Feature Film. Festivals: Sundance 2020, Berlinale 2020, Crossing Europe Linz 2020, Taipei 2020, New Zealand FF 2020, Melbourne 2020, Shanghai 2020, Sarajevo 2020, Zurich 2020. Awards: German Screenplay Award 2020; Best Film, Best Male Actor, Günter Rohrbach Film Prize; Taiwan Film Critics Society Award, Taipei 2020; Best Film, Sarajevo 2020

In the face of micro-aggressions (and worse) from his German work colleagues, a prickly Kosovo-born pharmaceutical engineer becomes increasingly paranoid and plunges into an identity crisis. In only his second feature, director-writer Visar Morina (*Babai*) creates a knockout experience with claustrophobic cinematography, intelligent production design, and edgy soundscapes, complementing brilliant performances by Mišel Matičević (*Babylon Berlin*), and the ubiquitous Sandra Hüller (*Toni Erdmann*). *Variety* calls it “a nervily comic, impressively poised psychodrama.”

GIPSY QUEEN

Feature, Drama, Germany/Austria, 2019, 112 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Hüseyin Tabak. Screenplay: Hüseyin Tabak. Cinematography: Lukas Gnaiger. Cast: Alina Serban, Tobias Moretti, Irina Kurbanova, Producer: Danny Krausz. Festivals: Hamburg 2019, Tallinn Black Nights 2019, Santa Barbara 2020, Göteborg 2020, Shanghai 2020. Awards: Best Actress & Estonian Ecumenical Jury Prize, Tallinn 2019; Best Leading Actress, German Screen Actors Awards 2020

Charismatic single mother Ali works herself to the bone as a cleaner at the Ritze nightclub in Hamburg so that her two children can have the opportunities inherent in a German life and education. Long ago, as a promising young boxer, Ali was the pride and joy of her father and the Romanian Roma community, but she was disowned after bearing children out of wedlock. One night, Ali discovers the boxing ring in the basement of the Ritze, and it brings back memories. Ritze owner and former boxer Tanner recognizes her talent, and as she starts to box again, she sees the chance of a better life... but at what price?

I WAS I AM I WILL BE (ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT)

Feature, Drama, Germany/France, 2019, 120 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Ilker Çatak. Screenplay: Nils Mohl, Ilker Çatak. Cinematography: Florian Mag. Cast: Anne Ratte-Polle, Oğulcan Arman Uslu, Godehard Giese, Jörg Schüttauf, Sebastian Urzendowsky. Producer: Ingo Fliess. Festivals: Santa Barbara 2020, Istanbul 2020, Munich 2020. Awards: Best Acting, Best Screenplay, Munich 2019; Best Leading Actress, Bavaria Film Prize 2020; Best Film (Bronze), German Film Awards 2020

After a Kurdish gigolo and an airline pilot meet at a Turkish resort, their lives change in unexpected ways. Given the opportunity to study and work in Germany, Baran moves from a troubled past to a complicated present, with the prospect of a promising future not far from his grasp. Meanwhile, his mentor, Marion, bravely confronts unanticipated challenges. In his second feature, director-co-writer Ilker Çatak, a former Student Oscar® winner, boldly challenges stereotypes and expectations to create a touching humanist drama.

SLEEP (SCHLAF)

Feature, Thriller, Germany, 2020, 100 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Michael Venus. Screenplay: Thomas Friedrich, Michael Venus. Cinematography: Marius von Felbert. Cast: Gro Swantje Kohlhof, Sandra Hüller, August Schmörlzer, Marion Kracht, Max Hubacher, Producer: Verena Gräfe-Höft. Festivals: Berlinale 2020, Zurich 2020, Chicago 2020 (New Directors Competition)

Dreams and reality collide in this ambitious, unsettling psychological thriller that tackles the horrors of Germany's past using folklore and fairytale imagery. Director-writer Michael Venus describes his feature debut as “an antithesis of the German Heimatfilm.” A flight attendant (a game Sandra Hüller of *Toni Erdmann* fame) suffers a breakdown after experiencing demonic nightmares. Her resourceful daughter (Gro Swantje Kohlhof, from the zombie flick *Ever After*) visits the village of Stainbach where her comatose mother lies hospitalized, and gradually unearths their sinister family history as well as an assembly of Nazi sympathizers. Amie Simon from *I Love Splatter* calls it “a delirious and delicious supernatural mystery with a creepy patriarchal cult wrapper.”

BORN IN EVIN

Documentary, Human Interest, Germany/Austria, 2019, 100 min., Farsi, English, French, German with English subtitles. Director: Maryam Zaree. Screenplay: Maryam Zaree. Cinematography: Siri Klug. Producers: Alex Tondowski, Ira Tondowski. Festivals: Berlinale 2019, Hot Docs Toronto 2019, Heartland 2019, IDFA Amsterdam 2019. Awards: Compass Perspective Award Berlinale 2019, Cineuropa Audience Award for Best Feature Film 2019, Best Documentary German Film Award 2020

In her directing debut, German-Iranian actress Maryam Zaree confronts the circumstances of her birth inside one of the world's most notorious prisons. Her parents, political opponents to Iran's leader Ayatollah Khomeini, spent years in prison, and then managed to find asylum in Germany. But they never talked about their persecution and imprisonment, so Zaree turns to other survivors of Evin, talks to experts, and searches

for children born in the same prison. What are the personal consequences of persecution and violence when the same perpetrators remain in power while the victims internalize their stories? And what does it mean, politically, to face the silence within the family?

GARAGE PEOPLE (GARAGENVOLK)

Documentary, Human Interest, Germany, 2020, 95 min., Russian with English subtitles. Director: Natalija Yefimkina, Screenplay: Natalija Yefimkina, Cinematography: Axel Schnepf, Producers: Andrea Schütte, Dirk Decker. Festivals: Berlinale 2020, CHP:DOX 2020, Crossing Europe Linz 2020, DocAviv 2020. Awards: Heiner Carow Prize Berlinale 2020

When it comes to expressing their individualism, American males have their “man caves”. But for certain rural Russians, it’s the garage that provides a window into their personal lives. Director Natalija Yefimkina spent four years earning the trust of her subjects in Russia’s far north. With a sociologist’s eye, she documents their special boltholes: one is used for breeding quails, another for the rehearsals of a punk band. There’s a metal workshop and one for carving wooden icons. Perhaps most surprising is the enterprising man who spent a lifetime excavating his space, so that it now encompasses four underground levels. It’s a legacy that he will bequeath to his grandson.

OECONOMIA

Documentary, Human Interest, Germany, 2020, 89 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Carmen Losmann, Screenplay: Carmen Losmann, Cinematography: Dirk Lütter, Producers: Hannes Lang, Mareike Wegener. Festivals: Berlinale 2020, CHP: DOX 2020, Sheffield 2020, Zurich 2020, Ji.Hlava 2020, IDFA Amsterdam 2020. Awards: Winner TESTIMONIES competition Ji.Hlava 2020

What is money? What are debts? What are the consequences of both? And how can images be found for them? Layer by layer, *Oeconomia* reveals how the rules of the contemporary capitalist game systematically precondition growth, deficits, and concentrations of wealth. With praiseworthy shrewdness and rigor, director Carmen Losmann articulates in layman’s terms the more egregious aspects of capitalist economy rendered invisible by the prevalent media coverage. Her striking visual concept contrasts the glass transparency of financial institutions with their reflecting, glittering facades, which are almost completely inaccessible to outsiders.

WALCHENSEE FOREVER

Documentary, Human Interest, Germany, 2020, 110 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Janna Ji Wonders, Screenplay: Janna Ji Wonders, Cinematography: Janna Ji Wonders, Sven Zellner, Anna Werner, Producers: Martin Heisler, Katharina Bergfeld, Nadja Smith. Festivals: Berlinale 2020, Thessaloniki Doc 2020, Istanbul 2020, Biografilm Bologna 2020. Awards: Compass Perspektive Award Berlinale 2020, Bavarian Film Awards 2020, Golden Alexander Newcomers Award Thessaloniki 2020, Best Film Unipol Award Biografilm Bologna 2020

In this personal story about the eternal cycle of life, identity, roots, and self-fulfillment, director Janna Ji Wonders seeks to uncover the secrets of her family’s past and her role among four generations of strong, passionate women. Entrenched in their home near Bavaria’s Lake Walchensee, the women manage a café while the men in their lives come and go. But with the freedoms of the 1960s, Janna’s mother Anna and her aunt Frauke take off for Mexico, where they perform traditional German music and take part in Ayahuasca ceremonies. They also visit San Francisco during the “Summer of Love,” travel to Indian ashrams, and became part of Rainer Langhans’ Kommune 1 in Berlin. But still, they ultimately return to Lake Walchensee.

JUST A GUY

Short Animated Documentary, Germany, 2020, 15 min., English. Director: Shoko Hara, Screenplay: Simon Thummet, Cinematography: Shoko Hara, Producer: Stefan Michel. Festivals: (selection) Hot Docs Toronto 2020, Krakow 2020, Animafest Zagreb 2020, Annecy 2020, Guanajuato 2020, Odense 2020, Message-to-Man St. Petersburg 2020, Raindance London 2020, Ottawa 2020, Ghent 2020, Sapporo 2020, Riga 2020, Kaohsiung 2020, Uppsala 2020, Bucheon 2020, Reanima Bergen 2020, Cork 2020, Anim’est Bucharest 2020, PÖFF Shorts Tallinn 2020, Torino 2020, Animateka Ljubljana 2020, Clermont-Ferrand 2021, Anima Brussels 2021. Awards: Golden Dragon, Krakow 2020; Grand Prix, Animafest Zagreb 2020; Golden Centaur, Grand Prix, Message-to-Man St. Petersburg 2020; Special Jury Award, Sapporo 2020; Best Animated Documentary, Reanima Bergen 2020; Special Jury Prize, Torino 2020

Just A Guy is an animated documentary short film about love. Three women share glimpses of their affection, attraction, and relationship with Richard Ramirez: a serial killer and rapist they contacted after he was convicted in the 1980s. Through their perspective, we revisit exchanged letters and emotions that are as obsessive as they are hauntingly familiar.

LAND OF GLORY (PANNÓNIA DICSERETE)

Short Fiction, Drama, Germany, 2020, 27 min., Hungarian with English subtitles. Director: Borbála Nagy, Screenplay: Borbála Nagy, Judit Anna Bánházi, Cinematography: Moritz Friese, Cast: Hanna Angelus, Nóra Rainer-Micsinyei, Zsuzsa Faragó, Péter Jankovics, Producer: Margarita Amineva. Festivals: Max Ophüls Prize, Saarbrücken 2020, Filmfest Dresden 2020, Achtung Berlin 2020, Cologne Short Film Festival 2020, Poitiers Film Festival 2020, Premiers Plans Angers 2021. Awards: Best Medium-Length Film, Achtung Berlin 2020; Third Jury Award & Audience Award, Cologne Short Film Festival 2020; German Short Film Award 2020

A school somewhere in Hungary. An ordinary literature class with unextraordinary, indifferent students. It feels like a normal day, except that the Hungarian Prime Minister is about to visit. The school secretary, the mastermind of the ceremony, tries to keep everything under control, especially the celebratory cake, which doesn’t fit in the fridge. While the cooks struggle to fix the problem, 17-year-old Márta, who is supposed to greet the Prime Minister on stage, hesitantly prepares her little rebellion.

MASEL TOV COCKTAIL

Short Fiction, Drama, Satire, Germany, 2020, 30 min., German/Russian with English subtitles. Directors: Arkadij Khaet, Mickey Paatzsch, Screenplay: Arkadij Khaet, Merle Teresa Kirchhoff, Cinematography: Nikolaus Schreiber, Cast: Alexander Wertmann, Mateo Wansing Lorrio, Gwentsche Kollwijn, Liudmyla Vasylieva, Vladislav Grakovskiy, Steffen C. Jürgens, Producers: Christine Duttlinger, Ludwig Meck, Lotta Schmelzer. Festivals (selection): Max Ophüls Prize Saarbrücken 2020, Flickers Rhode Island 2020, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2020, Ghent 2020, Boston Jewish Film Festival 2020, Moscow Jewish Film Festival 2020, HollyShorts Los Angeles 2020, New York Jewish Film Festival 2021, Flickerfest Sydney 2021, Atlanta Jewish Film Festival 2021, Denver Jewish Film Festival 2021, Miami Jewish Film Festival 2021. Awards (selection): Audience Award Midlength Film, Max Ophüls Prize Saarbrücken 2020; Best Actor, Flickers Rhode Island 2020; Youth Jury Award, San Francisco Jewish Film Festival 2020; Best Midlength Film, Five Lakes Film Festival 2020; Best Main Actor & Best Script Award, La Cabina Valencia 2020; Best Short Film, Boston Jewish Film Festival 2020; Audience Award, Moscow Jewish Film Festival 2020; Best Education Film & Best Student Film, German Human Rights Film Award 2020

- Ingredients:** 1 Jew, 12 Germans, 50 ml Culture of Remembrance, 30 ml stereotypes, 2 teaspoons of patriotism, 1 teaspoon of Israel, 1 falafel, 5 Stumbling Stones, a dash of antisemitism
- Directions:** Put all ingredients into a film, bring to boil and shake vigorously. Then garnish with Klezmer music.
- Consumption:** Light before serving. Enjoy at the cinema. 100% kosher

19-year-old Dimitrij Liebermann punched Tobi in the face. Now he's supposed to apologize to him. But Dimitrij doesn't exactly feel sorry. While on his way to meet up with Tobi, he encounters a diverse representation of German society. Again and again, Dimitrij faces one struggle he needs to overcome: his German-Jewish identity. An analysis of the status quo.

TOP DOWN MEMORY

Experimental Documentary Short, Germany, 2020, 12 min., German with English subtitles. Director: Daniel Theiler, Screenplay: Daniel Theiler, Cinematography: Smina Bluth, Cast: Charity Collin, Lothar Binger, Noemi Castellanos, Linus Ralling, Martin Sabrow, Mechthild Schade, Mandy Unger, Thalia Werner, Producer: Daniel Theiler. Festivals: Stuttgart Filmwinter 2021

Top Down Memory deals with the manipulation of history in the context of the reconstruction of the Berlin Palace ("Humboldtforum"). Starting from the confusions surrounding an alleged proclamation of a socialist republic from one of its balconies in 1918, the film examines other political events that occurred on balconies. Reenactments of iconic political and cultural events on the original balcony raise questions about authenticity and manipulation. Who is writing our history? How do we deal with our past? How does collective memory work? The balcony is the central motive of the film, representing hierarchies and power politics.

MORE INFORMATION

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ABOUT US

The German Film Office is an initiative of the Goethe-Institut and German Films. Its mission is to promote films from Germany to New York and US audiences and to strengthen their presence in art house cinemas, cultural and educational institutions, and digital platforms. In collaboration with local partners, its programs

give viewers the opportunity to engage with the entire history of German cinema in a variety of formats.
germanfilmoffice.us

German Films is the national information and advisory center for the international distribution of German films. Through information, PR, and marketing, German Films focuses on increasing the awareness of German films abroad and their visibility in the international media.

german-films.de

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute. With 157 institutes in 98 countries, we promote the study of German abroad, encourage international cultural exchange, and convey a contemporary image of Germany.

goethe.de/newyork

With a library of over 4,000 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Repertory and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering seven Academy Award® nominations in nine years. In addition, the company brings over 350 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases.

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Image: *Berlin Alexanderplatz* © Stefanie Kulbach

